

Expenses and overtime go live at Freshfields

With more than 2,400 lawyers in 26 offices across 15 countries, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer is one of the world's foremost international law firms. The firm can trace its history back to 1743, and today advises large corporations, financial institutions and governments in all areas of corporate law. Freshfields has been using rekoop since January 2009 to handle all its London office expenses.

Sue Qualter of the finance team recalls: "We needed an online expense system and arranged a beauty parade of possible suppliers. We immediately liked rekoop for their can-do approach, and the flexibility they offered us. They're very friendly, and don't come over as technology people – they just give us what we want."

Freshfields introduced rekoop in phases, starting with smaller practice groups and then rolling out across the organisation. Key to the system's success is the ability it offers Sue, as the administrator, to make business changes herself. "If someone needs a new expense type, I can just put it in," she says.

rekoop's reporting facilities are also important. "Before we had rekoop," says Sue, "it would have taken us three weeks to put together the kinds of report we now get automatically." The team runs regular exception reports to ensure that the firm's expenses policies are understood and are being observed. Sue can also run reports to analyse expense activity by teams and individuals, or by projects and clients.

the perfect can-do and flexible approach

Crucially, rekoop has accelerated Freshfields' response time, ensuring that costs are captured when they are incurred, and are billed correctly to clients in a timely manner. "We used to have one person trying to key in 200 people's expenses every week – so we were always behind," Sue remembers.

Now approved expenses are processed overnight through the firm's billing system, and recoverable costs are available for billing to clients along with project fees – rather than following some time later, or being absorbed by Freshfields.

Freshfields has also implemented rekoop's overtime solution. Now the firm's secretaries can enter overtime hours alongside expenses, and these hours progress through the same approval and payment process as expenses. As well as being a good fit with the expense recording process, this strategy allows staff members to see how their overtime claims are progressing. There's more visibility, accountability and assurance for everyone.

Sue and her team are now looking to include foreign currency advances in the system, so that lawyers travelling across borders can log their cash usage as they go. Time capturing on mobile devices is currently being piloted, with the intention that legal teams action their expenses and overtime as they occur, rather than waiting until they can use a PC.

rekoop is making a difference at Freshfields because it fits naturally into both the business flow and the technical infrastructure. The application integrates with the firm's practice management system, so that expense management is a simple, effective and manageable feature of a fully secure system that serves the business's goals.